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TO: Chief School Administrators  
Charter School Lead Persons  
Educator Preparation Provider Leaders

FROM: Peter Shulman, Assistant Commissioner/Chief Talent Officer *PS*  
Division of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness

**SUBJECT: Update on Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Regulations and Activities**

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Within the New Jersey Department of Education ("the Department"), the Division of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (TLE) focuses on what it takes to attract, develop, and retain a world-class corps of educators. This involves creating policies and programs to support teachers and leaders throughout their entire lifecycle as educators – starting with recruiting and preparing strong candidates, supporting them as they grow to reach their full potential, and working to retain them in the profession and the state. We aim to accomplish this work by creating the environment for districts to provide an excellent education for all students in a way that complements, rather than burdens, district leadership in making local decisions.

Although many of our recent communications have centered around AchieveNJ, New Jersey's new educator evaluation and support system, the TLE Division is also focused on the other critical elements of the educator lifecycle. Over the past several months, the State has been developing a series of initiatives intended to raise the bar to enter the education profession and proposed a related regulatory package to the State Board on June 5. In addition, TEACHNJ regulations for certification and professional development that were proposed last year, have been officially adopted as of June 5; they will go into effect in July.

The purpose of this memo is to share more information about these proposed and newly-adopted regulations and related activities, and to offer guidance on mentoring requirements for veteran teachers new to a district (not yet included in regulation).

## **I. Enhancing Educator Preparation**

### **A. Proposed Regulations for Educator Preparation**

New Jersey students deserve an academically and cognitively strong teaching force, and research indicates a strong positive relationship between teacher cognitive ability and higher student outcomes<sup>1</sup>. We believe that establishing higher academic expectations for those entering teacher preparation will help to elevate the profession and improve student learning. To that end, we have proposed regulations to increase minimum standards for educator preparation (please see the [memo released on May 14](#) for more information on the context for and stakeholder involvement with this work).

The [regulations proposed to the State Board](#) on June 5 include the following:

#### **1. GPA Entry and Certification Requirements**

- Raise the required grade point average (GPA) for **entry into a traditional teacher preparation program** from 2.5 to 3.0, beginning in Sept. 2015. This includes a “grace period” where programs collect and report averages, but will not have consequences.
- Raise the required GPA for **“entrance” into an alternate route pathway** from 2.75 to 3.0, in order to obtain a Certificate of Eligibility (CE), beginning in Sept. 2014.
- Raise the required GPA for a **Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS) for traditional route candidates** from 2.75 to 3.0, beginning in Sept. 2014.

Along with several neighboring states, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), and National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) all have recommended that educator preparation programs should require a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 (for individual teachers or a cohort).

#### **2. Basic Skills Assessment for Entry**

- Require an assessment of basic skills (Praxis I) for entry into a traditional or alternate route program beginning in Sept. 2014, and allow candidates with a high enough SAT or ACT score to waive the assessment.

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<sup>1</sup> Henry, et al. (2012), Rockoff, et al. (2011), Whitehurst, G. (2002)

Current requirements are vague about assessing basic skills, requiring candidates to “demonstrate acceptable levels of proficiency in English and Mathematics.” New Jersey needs more standardized entry requirements across programs to allow for comparability and to reflect the same high bar for all teacher candidates.

### 3. Performance Assessment for Certification

- Require a Commissioner-approved performance assessment for certification of traditionally prepared candidates as of Jan. 2016. The Department plans to utilize a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process to allow multiple providers to submit assessments for review and potential approval.

Currently, there is no state-mandated requirement for a teacher candidate to demonstrate his/her pedagogical effectiveness prior to entering the classroom. Under these regulations, all teacher candidates in traditional preparation programs will demonstrate their cognitive ability and knowledge of content and pedagogy before attaining certification. The RFQ approach is intended to allow a variety of high-quality assessment options with the goal of keeping costs down to the greatest extent possible.

To submit official comments about proposed regulations to the State Board, please visit <https://education.state.nj.us/code/index.php?chap=9&chap2=tp&level=f>.

## **B. Non-Regulatory Educator Preparation Changes**

In addition to proposed regulations, the Department is pursuing some non-regulatory initiatives to complement improvements to educator preparation across the state.

First, we plan to remove the current price cap that limits tuition costs for alternate route candidates to \$1,500 for a 200-hour program, starting in Aug. 2014. The price cap limits program quality and discourages some providers from entering the market. Removing the cap will allow providers to expand their programs and increase their quality of programming relative to their costs.

Another critical component of our work on educator preparation is the development of an Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) Annual Report. This report will be designed to show the effectiveness of EPP programs in preparing New Jersey teachers and leaders, and to drive program support, review, and accountability. Over the past several months, the Department has met with EPP representatives through an Educator Preparation Working Group to discuss the development of this report, including its purpose, an initial template, and a timeline for implementation. We will share more information about this initiative as it becomes available.

Taken together, we believe both the regulatory and non-regulatory changes outlined above will strengthen the teaching profession in New Jersey. To share questions or feedback, please email [rpr@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:rpr@doe.state.nj.us).

## II. Newly Adopted Certification and Professional Development (Chapter 9) Regulations

To address recommendations of the Governor's 2012 Education Transformation Task Force and ease requirements that can be burdensome for districts in attracting, hiring, and placing staff, new regulations adopted on June 5, 2013 make the following **amendments to certification requirements**:

- Change K-5 authorization to K-6.
- Reduce non-health and safety-related entry requirements for regular school nurse and school nurse/non-instructional positions and instead require them to be covered during the initial professional development period.
- Create a three-tiered alternate route certificate structure for charter schools (CE, Provisional, Standard) in which the entry-level content requirement can be satisfied by the content test only, with standard certification available after one year of successful teaching; clarify that charter school certificates are valid only for use in charter schools.
- Grant the Commissioner latitude in approving alternate route programs for documented teacher shortage areas.

In addition, **professional development regulations** adopted on June 5, 2013 promote a streamlined process that supports continuous improvement and is more embedded in daily school activities. Reducing levels of oversight focuses accountability while providing needed flexibility for effective professional learning that results in improved student outcomes. The regulations include the following:

- A new definition of professional development and revised Standards of Professional Learning;
- The creation of one combined State Committee on Professional Learning, which will replace the previous Professional Teaching Standards Board and Professional Development Advisory Committee for School Leaders to ensure an integrated approach to teacher and school leader professional development;
- Revised individual professional development plan requirements;
- Shifting from a requirement of 100 hours of professional development over 5 years to 20 hours each year for teachers; and
- New district and school professional development planning processes intended to reduce burdens on districts and schools and focus attention on collaborative professional learning with student outcomes at the center.

Please see Appendix A for the detailed [Overview of Revised Professional Development Regulations](#) (also posted as a PDF on our website as linked here).

In the coming weeks, we will provide additional guidance and resources to assist districts with implementing new professional development requirements in SY13-14 and beyond.

## III. Guidance on Mentoring for Experienced Teachers New to a District

The [TEACHNJ Act](#) calls for all non-tenured teachers in their *first year in the profession* or in their *first year in a new district* to take part in a district mentoring program.

### **Mentoring for Teachers New to the Profession**

For SY13-14, districts should act in accordance with current regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A:9-8.4: Requirements for local mentor plan) when implementing a mentoring program for novice teachers under the provisional certificate (those new to the profession).

### **Mentoring for Experienced Teachers New to a District**

The Department intends to propose regulations to implement the mentoring support requirements for experienced teachers new to a district in the coming months. For SY13-14, districts will be provided flexibility in implementing the new requirements of the law, and in turn we offer the following guidance to help districts prepare the necessary supports.

The purpose of this mentoring program is to provide an overview of the district's vision for teaching and learning and a comprehensive orientation to its policies and procedures while also addressing the unique supports each teacher needs to be successful. Specifically, the orientation should include:

- An overview of key district and school policies and curriculum, and
- Training on the district evaluation process, teacher practice evaluation instrument, and the development of [Student Growth Objectives \(SGOs\)](#).

Mentoring activities for these teachers may be offered in a variety of formats designed to meet the unique needs of each teacher. Specific activities should be addressed in the teacher's individual professional development plan (PDP) and should be tailored to meet the teacher's needs based on prior experience and identified needs. The PDP must be developed within the first 30 days of employment (this is a change from 60 days, which was the previous policy before the adoption of revised professional development regulations on June 5).

For questions or feedback about professional development and mentoring requirements, please email [teachpd@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:teachpd@doe.state.nj.us) or call 609-292-9556.

Thank you for your attention to this information, and for your collaboration in our work to support and promote effective educators in New Jersey.

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## Appendix A: Overview of Revised Professional Development Regulations

Revised regulations for professional development were adopted by the State Board of Education on June 5, 2013. These regulations reflect the recommendations of the [Governor's 2012 Education Transformation Task Force Report](#), which called for more streamlined structures for professional development planning at the local level, and align with the [TEACHNJ](#) legislation.

### New Definition of Professional Development, Revised Standards for Professional Learning

- The new [definition of professional development](#) identifies a clear focus on teacher and school leader effectiveness and provides guidelines for related professional learning strategies and activities.
- New Jersey's revised [Standards for Professional Learning](#) focus on connecting educator learning to student learning, describing elements of high-quality professional development that lead to effective teaching practice and supportive leadership practice.

### New State Committee on Professional Learning

A new 16-member State Committee on Professional Learning, comprised of educators and education stakeholders, will be appointed in July 2013 to advise the Commissioner on professional development policy and implementation for teachers and school leaders. This committee will replace the Professional Teaching Standards Board and the Professional Development Advisory Committee for School Leaders, with the goal of creating complementary and aligned policies and practices for teachers and leaders.

### Individual Professional Development Requirements Starting in SY13-14

- Each **teacher** must develop an individualized professional development plan (PDP) in consultation with his/her supervisor; this is typically done at the end of each school year, and must be done **within the first 30 days of employment** for those new to a district.
- Each teacher must complete **at least 20 hours of professional development each school year** (changing the previous requirement of 100 hours over 5 years).
  - The move to a yearly hourly requirement ensures that PDPs are revisited each year and are aligned with the teacher's evaluation results as well as any learning related to school, team, or district priorities.
- **School and district leaders** will be required to develop an annual professional development plan that derives from the results of their annual evaluation and identifies professional goals aligned to individual, school, and/or district goals.
  - **School leaders** whose positions require a principal or supervisor's endorsement will **develop their plans in consultation with their superintendent** (chief school administrator) or designee.
  - **Superintendents** will develop their plans for review by their local board of education.

All school leaders will be required to provide evidence of progress towards fulfillment of their plans.



## **New School and District Professional Development Planning Processes**

Starting in SY13-14, schools and districts will transition to new, streamlined governance structures for professional development plans. District-level professional development plans will be expanded to address school leaders as well as teachers and educational services personnel. Please see this [detailed overview of the changing planning structure](#) for more information.

### **School Professional Development Planning and Implementation**

The principal or school leader will be responsible for developing and implementing the SY14-15 school professional development plan in consultation with other staff and the [School Improvement Panel \(ScIP\)](#). The ScIP was established through the TEACHNJ Act to conduct evaluations, lead mentoring, and identify professional development opportunities, and must be comprised of the principal, the assistant principal or vice principal, and at least one teacher. In planning for school-level professional development, the principal has the flexibility to:

- Use the ScIP in place of the former school professional development committee (SPDC); or
- Maintain the SPDC to support the ScIP or to maintain the SPDC and appoint qualified members to serve on the ScIP.

The superintendent will review all school-level plans and include a narrative description in the district professional development plan.

### **District Professional Development Planning and Implementation**

The superintendent will be responsible for developing the SY14-15 district professional development plan in consultation with staff, and will have the flexibility to determine a planning process that meets the needs of the district.

- The superintendent can create new structures to oversee professional development at the district level, repurpose the District Evaluation Advisory Committee (DEAC), or continue to work with the local professional development committee.
- The financial elements of the district plan must be approved by the local board of education; after such approval district plans will be maintained at the district level.
- The superintendent will implement the plan with assistance from other staff and in collaboration with the ScIP at the school level.
- The superintendent will also be responsible for developing the district's mentoring plan.

### **For More Information**

For more information on the new professional development requirements, please view the following resources:

- [Revised Regulations Adopted June 5, 2013](#)
- [AchieveNJ Professional Development and Support Overview](#)
- [AchieveNJ School Improvement Panel and Strengthening Evaluation Overview](#)
- [AchieveNJ Roles in Planning for and Implementing Evaluation, Professional Development, and Mentoring Overview](#)

To share questions or comments, please email [teachpd@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:teachpd@doe.state.nj.us) or call 609-292-9556.